

Cultural Clashes in Translation: The Simpsons

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ABSTRAKT

Tato bakalářská práce se zabývá problémy spojenými s překladem kulturních rozdílů z anglického jazyka do jazyka českého v animovaném seriálu Simpsonovi. Teoretická část je zaměřena na metody samotného překladu, intertextualitu a samotné kulturní rozdíly mezi českou a americkou kulturou.

Praktická část analyzuje několik vybraných dílů seriálu Simpsonovi. Tento seriál je přímo založený na kulturních reáliích, které jsou v překladu buďto ponechány v originálním znění, a nebo je překlad přizpůsoben české kultuře. Praktická část tak poukazuje na problematiku překladu a zachování kulturních reálií.

Klíčová slova: překlad, intertextualita, kultura, Simpsonovi

ABSTRACT

This bachelor thesis is dealt with problems connected with cultural differences translation from English language to Czech language in American cartoon The Simpsons. The theoretical part is focused on translating methods, intertextuality and it also concerns the American and Czech cultural differences.

The practical part analyses several of The Simpsons episodes. This cartoon is full of cultural allusions which are either not translated or the translation is adapted to the Czech culture. This part discusses the differences of the given translation.

Keywords: translation, intertextuality, culture, The Simpsons

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INTRODUCTION

In these days of globalization we are surrounded by many foreign texts, TV shows, films or sitcoms. Just watching foreign films or reading foreign texts it is not enough for understanding the whole context. The recipient may not understand the text or dialogue properly without any background of the given text's or film's culture. It is very important to have some basic knowledge about culture the text or dialogue comes from.

There is one possibility, how to make it easier for the recipient. These cultural differences may be translated according to target language. It means that the original text is adapted to the culture of the given language. The text should not lose its original meaning but help the target audience to understand the context. Sometimes the original cultural information is not translated because the original expression is used in target language as well. In this case the background knowledge is needed.

This bachelor thesis is divided into two parts: theoretical part and analysis. Both the theoretical and the practical parts consist of three main chapters.

The first chapter of the theoretical part Translation discusses translation itself, its approaches to translating and main problematic feature in translation such as parody, metaphors, or puns. There are also discussed the denotation and connotation expressions.

The second chapter of the theoretical part is dealt mainly with the intertextuality. The intertextuality is one of the most crucial features needed whether during translating and reading a book or watching a film. Important feature in translating is the translator, of course. It depends mostly on him what information recipients get. The translator has to be familiar with the source language not only because of translation itself but also because of recipient. The translator should know how the target audience is familiar with the source text and its culture and according to this knowledge adapt the text into the source language, or for instance should use the explanatory notes in the text.

Last chapter in the theoretical part, third chapter, is dealt with the cultural differences between Czech and American culture. How the Czech culture differs from the American one and how these two cultures might be similar.

The second part of the bachelor thesis is the analysis and consists of three chapters as is mentioned above. The theory is applied on the TV show *The Simpsons*, the show which responds not only to current topics and issues in the USA but also to important historical events.

The fourth chapter Analyzed material tells us what exactly the show The Simpsons is, what are the main characters and how do they use the references to history, culture or politics and which episodes are analyzed.

The fifth chapter describes the methods used in chapter number six, where is found the analysis of given episodes of the Simpsons.

This bachelor thesis tries to prove that might be difficult to cope with cultural differences and their translation into different language and different culture. In some cases the cultural expression are transformed into target language but in some occurrences it is not possible and the original expressions are kept. Difficulties may be also with understanding whole plot intertextuality where whole episodes refer to a given historical event or to famous TV show. Again, the knowledge of American history or current popular culture would be needed.

I. THEORY

1 TRANSLATION

As this bachelor thesis is dealt with translation and its cultural clashes, the explanation of the term “*translation*” would be appropriate.

The word *to translate* derived from Latin word *translates*, which means “*carried across.*” The term *translation* itself has several meanings: it can refer to the general subject field, the product (the text that has been translated) or the process (the act of producing the translation, otherwise known as translating). This thesis deals with both – the product and the process of translation.

The relation between original text and its reproduction in a foreign language is one of the main questions in translation. Generally, the translation should faithfully reproduce original text. The ideal faithful translation should keep the match of content and language expressions.¹ The process of translation between two different languages involves changing an original text into a text in different language. The translator should keep an aesthetic character and an impress on a reader in different literal and cultural context.

Very important factor is a time interval translation and the time when the origin text was written. Whereas the reader of the original text was brought face to face with a new text, the translator of the original text has to be aware of cultural and literal facts. The translator reproduces not only the text but also the cultural values.

The translation should be oriented on equivalent reaction of recipient. That means it is supposed to comply with needs of target language, its target culture and message context. Important is stylistics choose of word symbols and their ordering. The translation should keep semiotic, pragmatic and communicative characters of signs. There are also some restriction, such as genre or convention of given culture.²

Language means can differ because author’s and recipient’s age, origin, social environment, educational level, etc., or because they are in different situations, their motivation for communication can vary, the range of listeners can be also various.

The translator should adapt his translation to target recipients according to his experiences and knowledge because these recipients can be from different cultures. It means that the translator should be familiar with not only culture itself, but also with history of given culture, historical events, and also with names, events, buildings,

¹ Ján Vilikovský, *Překladjakotvorba*, (Praha: Ivo Železný, 2002), 67

² Vilikovský, 8

newspapers, geographical names, names of national names or dances. The translator has to be able to consider whether his translation is enough for understanding the text or if the translation needs some comments. On the other hand if in the text are some obvious information which are understandable from the context, comments are not required.

The great part on translation and its theory takes textual linguistics (deals with relations between author of the text and recipient), contrastive linguistics, sociolinguistics, pragmalinguistics and psycholinguistics. The translator has to also consider a phonetic part.

In these days, the functional approach is considered as a basic principle. It means that do not matter which language means the translator use, but these means have to have the same functions.³

It is important to define what a text is and who is a receiver. According to *Discourse Analysis* written by H. G. Widdoson, a text can be defined as an actual use of language, as distinct from a sentence which is an abstract unit of linguistic analysis. We identify a piece of language as a text as soon as we recognize that it has been produced for a communicative purpose. People produce texts to get a message across, to express ideas and beliefs, to explain something to get other people to do certain things or to think in a certain way and so on. We can refer to this complex of communicative purposes as the discourse. According to linguist Widdoson, the discourse refers to both to what a text producer means by a text and what a text means to the receiver. "The viewer" should be an interpreter of the meaning in the text.

1.1 Factors influencing the translation

The translation word for word is not enough. There are many factors which influence the translating and the translator should consider them very carefully. The translator has to completely understand the customs or lifestyle of a group so as to translate in a manner which is suitable for the given group.

The most important factors:

- a) Linguistics factors (phonological, syntactic and lexical factors)
- b) Cultural factors (intercultural and intracultural factors)
- c) Personal factors (such as personal, political or ethnical attitudes)⁴

³ Dagmar Knittlová, *K teorii i překlada* (Olomouc: Univerzita Palackého v Olomouci, 2003), 6

1.2 Approaches to translations

There are many approaches to translating, and many linguists deal with this problematic. Jakobson follows the relation explained by Swiss linguist Saussure between the signifier (the spoken and written signal) and the signified (the concept signified). Then, he moved on to consider the thorny problem of equivalence in meaning between words in different languages. He points out that “there is ordinarily no full equivalence between codes – units’. In Jacobson’s description, interlingual translation involves “substitute message in one language not for separate code – units but for entire messages in some other languages.”⁵

According to linguist and well-known translator Vilíkovský absolutely exact translation does not exist. If the interpretation in the language A of an expression does not exist in isolation, but it exists as a part of the whole language system, it is not possible to separate the expression in language B from the rest of the whole system. “The transmission of an expression” from one language to another is not possible and therefore the translation cannot have the same meaning. He divided the process of translating into three parts, into an interpretation, conception, and original reproduction.

Linguist Julia Kristeva emphasizes that texts are always in a state of production, rather than being products to be quickly consumed. In her view, ideas are not presented as finished, consumable products, but are presented in such a way as to encourage readers to come up with their own interpretation of its meaning.⁶

Contemporary linguists deal with methods of translation. Everyone can have different point of view how to work with text and how to translate it. But most of them work on assumptions of Vinay and Darbelnet. They used their seven basic methods from the easiest one to the most difficult. These are as follow:

- a) **Transcription** – transcript of the text into the target language,
- b) **Calque** – literal translation (*potflower: hrnkovákytka*),
- c) **Substitution** – replacement of one expression by similar one,

⁴ Dongfeng Wong and Dan Shen, “Factors Influencing the Process of Translating,” *Journal des traducteurs* 44., no. 24 (1999). <http://www.erudit.org/revue/meta/1999/v44/n1/004616ar.pdf> (accessed April 26, 2013)

⁵ Mona Baker, *In other words* (London: Routledge), 36-37

⁶ Julia Kristeva, *Desire in Language: A Semiotic Approach to Literature and Art* (New York: Columbia University Press), 120

- d) **Transposition** – grammatical changes are needed because of different language system,
- e) **Modulation** – change of the point of view (*angle-joint of the pipe: kolenopotrubi*),
- f) **Equivalence** – use of stylistic and structural means different from original (*my sweet girl: děvenka*),
- g) **Adaptation** – the situation in original text is substitute by other similar situation, if there are any in the target language (*proverbs, sayings, word-plays*).⁷

Next method is described in *A Textbook of Translation* by Peter Newmark. He covers these methods:

- a) **Word – for – word translation** is the translation where the text is translated singly by their most common meaning and the structure of the sentence is not converted into the target language. This translation is mainly used to translate technical texts.
- b) **Literal translation** means that lexical words are translated singly but the grammatical construction is converted to its nearest equivalents
- c) **Faithful translation** reproduces the precise contextual meaning of the original text. This translation does not limit the grammatical structure. It transfers cultural words.
- d) **Semantic translation** takes in account the aesthetic value. It is more flexible and allows the creativity.
- e) **Adaptation** is used mainly for films or plays. This translation is very free, there are no strict restrictions. The plot is usually preserved but the culture can be converted and the text rewritten as well.
- f) **Free translation** method reproduces the matter without the manner, or the content without the form of the original. Usually it is a paraphrase much longer than the original.⁸
- g) **Idiomatic translation** reproduces the message of the original text.
- h) **Communicative translation** method translates the text in such way that contextual meaning of the original and language are adapted to a reader. This method translates the text in such way that contextual meaning of the original and language are adapted to a reader.

⁷ Knitlová, 14

⁸ Peter Newmark, *A Textbook of Translation* (Hertfordshire: Prentice-Hall International, 1988), 54

According to linguist Nida, the translator has to expect stylistic restrictions during a text restructuring. Nida discuss five cases where appear problems with finding the correct equivalent:

- a) in foreigner language are not information which are needed in target language (*re-entry: vstup do atmosféry*)
- b) semantic elements in source language are not distinguished but these semantic element need to be distinguish in the target language (*stín: shadow/shade*)
- c) information needed in target language are ambiguous in source language (*rate: rychlost/množství*)
- d) information in source language are implicit but in target language must be explicit (*solid state physics: fyzikapevnýchlátek*)
- e) explicit information of source language must be transformed into the target language (*diplomovanýlékař: qualified medical practitioner*)⁹

Linguists Neubert and Ghreve dealt with a translation as a text. They consider basic text attributes as follow:

- a) message and its orientation (manual, novel, contract),
- b) acceptability (the text is adapted to a given culture),
- c) insertion in a situation (into the given time and given place),
- d) informativeness (rate of information, which the translation says),
- e) coherence (logical structure of the text),
- f) cohesion and (semantic cohesiveness),
- g) intertextuality(this term is discussed in details in the second chapter).¹⁰

1.3 Main problematic features in translation

Languages contain many features that the translator should be familiar with. Not only culture itself but also expressions used only in given source language. This thesis mentions main problematic aspects:

1.3.1 Denotation and connotation

Denotation and connotation are one of the most important features in the text. Denotative text without connotation and connotative text without denotation cannot work

⁹ Knittlová, 16

¹⁰ Ibid., 31

well. The text might not be understandable and may be very confusing for the target reader.

Denotation is the meaning of the word that we can find in a dictionary without any emotions whereas connotation gives us a context of the text, the meaning between lines. Words are not normally used in isolation, but are combined with other words to form larger units expressing various relationships. These units constitute the linguistic context in which a specific word operates.¹¹

1.3.2 Idioms

An idiom can be defined as a number of words which, when taken together, have a different meaning from the individual meanings of each word.¹² While using idioms, it is necessary to know in which situation is appropriate to use these idioms. The knowledge of idioms is demanding during translating from foreign language. It might happen that an idiom is informal or too formal, it is used only in slang, the idiom can be a taboo in given culture as well.

While using idioms, it is necessary to know in which situation is appropriate to use these idioms. The knowledge of idioms is demanding during translating from foreign language. It might happen that an idiom is informal or too formal, it is used only in slang,

1.3.3 Metaphors

According to Zoltán Kövecses and his work *Metaphor: A Practical Introduction* a metaphor is defined as understanding one conceptual domain in terms of another conceptual domain. Examples of this include when we talk and think about life in terms of journey (*life is a journey*), about arguments in terms of war, about ideas and theories in terms of buildings, about love also in terms of journey, about organization in terms of plants, and many others. There are two types of domains – target domains, that we try to understand and common source domain that we use for this purpose.

Common source domain can be human body (*give a hand*), health and illnesses, animals (*to be night owl*), plants, buildings and constructions, cooking or movement. As target domains we can consider emotions, desire, morality, society, politics, economy, human relationship, communication or religion.

¹¹ Howard Jackson and Etienne Zé Amvela, *Words, Meanings and Vocabulary* (London, The Cromwell Press, 2004), 57

¹² Jennifer Seidl and W. McMorris *English Idioms* (Oxford: Oxford University Press), 12 - 13

Metaphors go from concrete to abstract domains – the most common sources domains are concrete, while the most target domains are abstract concepts.

1.3.4 Pun

A pun is the use of word in such a way as to suggest two or more meanings or different associations, or the use of two or more words of the same or nearly the same sound with different meanings, so as to produce a humorous effect.¹³

Linguistics distinguishes many types of puns, the basics are as follows:

- visual pun uses pictures, mostly in logos or symbols
- homophonic pun depends on similar sounds of two absolutely different meanings (*see* and *sea*)
- homographic puns are words with the same or similar spelling but different meaning (*pen* as a tool for writing and *pen* as an cage for cattle)

¹³ Angus Stevenson and Waite Maurice, *Concise Oxford dictionary*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 167

2 INTERTEXTUALITY

Intertextuality is a part of linguistic study called semiotics. The pioneer of this study was the Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure. Intertextuality, like modern literary and cultural theory itself, can be said to have its origin in twentieth-century linguistics, particularly in the seminal work of already mentioned Ferdinand de Saussure.¹⁴ His theories and approaches are discussed in more detailed way in the following paragraphs.

One of the most important factors we have to consider during translating and also during receiving given text is a sociolinguistic factor. This factor influences language function in social context. Translators try to bring the message from source language to target language and every single target language has its own social background.

Next important factor is the intertextuality. The text is always influenced by similar texts, social norms, conventions, cultural attitudes, historical events. Therefore it is important to know the background of the culture of the source language. If the translator or the receiver does not have sufficient knowledge of source language culture, the translation can be incorrect or even wrong – the receiver or the translator does not have to recognize a parody, an imitation or an allusion.

Although de Saussure stressed the importance of the relationship of signs to each other, one of the weaknesses of structuralist semiotics is the tendency to treat individual texts as discrete, closed-off entities and to focus exclusively on internal structures.

For Mikhail Bakhtin the relation originated from the existence of the word within specific social registers, and specific moments of utterance and reception.¹⁵ Nevertheless, most people claim that Julia Kristeva is the inventor of the term “*intertextuality*”. She is influenced by both Bakhtin and de Saussure and tried to combine both attempts. But she also gives attention to human subjects. She takes in account that signifiers are plural, full of historical meaning. But in the Bakhtin’s work *Word, Dialogue and Novel* Kristeva concerns with establishing the manner in which a text is constructed of already existent discourse. She argues that the authors do not create their texts from their own mind, but rather compile them from pre-existent texts. She also claims that the text is not just an individual object but a complex of a cultural textuality. Kristeva believes that the individual text and the cultural text are made from the same textual material and cannot be separated from

¹⁴ Allen Graham, *Intertextuality*, (New York: Routledge, 2000), 2

¹⁵ Julia Kristeva, *Desire in Language: A Semiotic Approach to Literature and Art* (New York: Columbia University Press), 156

each other. She pays very close attention to a text, textuality and their relations. Kristeva deals with an abstract notion, however, she believed that the text cannot be separated from the larger cultural textuality out of which they are constructed. According to Kristeva, text does not present clear and stable meanings.

Thus intertextuality deals with a text's existence within society and history. Text is a temporary re-arrangement of elements with socially pre-existed meaning. Meaning is simultaneously both "inside" (reader's view) and "outside" (society's influence) the text.¹⁶ She argues that rather than confining our attention to the structure of a text we should study its "structuration."

The communication is always reciprocal – between the author and the reader. And this communication is paired with the intertextual relation between words and their prior existence in past texts. As Kristeva states, any text is constructed as a mosaic of quotations; any text is the absorption and transformation of another.

The semiotics Julia Kristeva refers to texts in terms of two axes: a horizontal axis connecting the author and reader of the text, and vertical axis, which connects the text to other texts. Uniting these two axes are shared codes: every text and every reading depends on prior codes.¹⁷

Because recognition of intertextuality might be difficult in some cases, here are some defining features of intertextuality:

- a) **Reflexivity**: how reflexive the use of intertextuality seems to be (if reflexivity is important to what it means to be intertextual, then presumably an indistinguishable copy goes beyond intertextuality),
- b) **Alteration**: the alteration of sources (more noticeable alternation presumably making it more reflexively intertextual),
- c) **Explicitness**: the specificity and explicitness of references to other texts,
- d) **Criticality to comprehension**: how important it would be for the reader to recognize the intertextuality involved,
- e) **Scale of adoption**: the overall scale of allusion within the text,
- f) **Structural unboundedness**: to what extent the text is presented as part of or tied to a larger structure (*e.g. part of a genre, of a series, of a serial, of a magazine, of an*

¹⁶ Kristeva, 56

¹⁷ Daniel Chandler. *Semiotics for beginners*. (New York: Routledge, 2002), 56

exhibition etc.) - factors which are often not under the control of the author of the text.¹⁸

One of the important features of intertextuality is the allusion. The allusion is the name for the device which brings about this ‘simultaneous activation of two texts.’¹⁹ It is commonly manifested by a ‘frame’. A frame is a ‘combination of words that is accepted in the language community as an example of preformed linguistic material.’²⁰ A frame might be anything: a proper name or expression, a famous citation, or only a single word.

It is possible for a frame to lose its original allusive power and become a stereotypical expression or an idiom²¹. This connection to the original context may be lost due to popularity of the expression, or due to the original context being forgotten. Making clear distinctions between allusive frames and idioms is not easy, especially with frames that are clearly in neither category.²²

A) Translating methods of proper name allusions

According to Leppihalme and *Cultural Bumps* the translator has three basic strategies when encountering a proper name allusion. The translator can keep the name unchanged, change it to a different name, or omit the name altogether. The exact method of implementing the basic strategy creates the following variations:

1. Retain name:

- a) Retain unchanged, or in conventional target language form.

Source language (SL): *He was a real Romeo with the ladies.*

Target language (TL): *K dívkám se choval jako Romeo.*

- b) Retain unchanged with added guidance

SL: *He was a real Romeo with the ladies.*

TL: *K dívkám se choval jako Romeo (Shakespearováhra Romeo a Julie).*

- c) Retain unchanged with detailed explanation

¹⁸ Chandler, 68

¹⁹ Esko, Hellgren, “Translation of Allusions in the Animated Cartoon The Simpsons.” (master’s thesis, University of Helsinki, 2007), 10

²⁰ Leppihalme, 1996. “Caught in the Frame: A Target-Culture Viewpoint on Allusive Wordplay,” *The Translator* 2, no. 2 (February, 1996) under “Translation Studies Abstract Online,” <https://www.stjerome.co.uk/tsa/issue/1/> (accessed April 1, 2013), 24

²¹ Ritva Leppihalme. *Cultural Bumps: An Empirical Approach to the Translation of Allusions* (Philadelphia: Multilingual Matters, 1997), 50

²² Esko, Hellgren, “Translation of Allusions in the Animated Cartoon The Simpsons.” (master’s thesis, University of Helsinki, 2007), 10

SL: *He was a real Romeo with the ladies.*

TL: *Choval se k dívkám jako Romeo (Romeo je jednou z hlavních postav Shakespearovy hry Romeo a Julie, ve které je Romeo ochotný obětovat vše pro svou lásku).*

2. Replace namedifferent target language name

SL: *She does her shopping only in Harodds store.*

TL: *Nakupuj pouzена Pařížské ulici.*

3. Omit name and allusion completely

SL: *That man looks very strong, like Swarzeneger.*

TL: *Ten muž vypadá velmi silně, jako kulturista.*

3 CULTURE AND LANGUAGE

3.1 Culture

Origin of the word *culture* comes from Latin and means “*growing*.” Culture is the art, customs, ideas and social behavior of people.²³ E. T. Hall claimed that culture can be likened to a giant, extraordinary complex, subtle computer. Its programs guide the actions and responses of human beings in every walk of life. This process requires attention to everything people do to survive, advance in the world, and gain satisfaction from life. Furthermore, cultural lives will not work if crucial steps are omitted, which happens when people unconsciously apply their own rules to another system.

Language is the principal means whereby we conduct our social lives. When it is used in contexts of communication, it is bound up with culture in multiple and complex way.²⁴ Language is a system of signs that is seen as having itself a cultural value. Thus we can say that a language symbolizes cultural reality.²⁵

Much of vocabulary of any language, and even parts of the grammar, will reflect the culture of its speakers. Indeed, specific concepts and ways of understanding embedded in a language are important parts of what constitutes a culture. Language is one of the main instruments by which children are socialized into the values, belief system, and practices of their culture.²⁶

3.2 Cultural clashes in translation

Nowadays we live in globalized world and televisions, the internet, newspapers help us to be aware of the different cultures and its values. When we interact with other people or a text we have to realize that every culture has different values, sees and interprets in different ways. In the world of cultural awareness there is no *only my way* or *their way*. Always there has to be *our way*.

According to Edward T. Hall each cultural world operates according to its own internal dynamic, its own principles, and its own laws – written and unwritten.

²³ Catherine Soanes and Sara Hawker, *Compact Oxford English Dictionary for Students*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press 2006), 103

²⁴ Claire Kramsch, *Language and culture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 4

²⁵ Kramsch, 4

²⁶ Cliff Goddard, *Semantic Analysis: A practical Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 1-2

It is possible to say that the world of communication can be divided into three parts: words, material things, and behavior. Words are the medium of business, politics, and diplomacy. Material things are usually indicators of status and power. Behavior provides feedback on how other people feel and includes techniques for avoiding confrontation.²⁷

Culture is very specific for each country and for each language. Therefore is sometimes necessary to know the culture of a translating language as well as the language itself. Even though we are interact with other culture face to face we should be aware of their culture and try to avoid any misunderstandings. Sometimes it may be more difficult therefore this thesis mentions few cases where the translation and understanding might be confusing.

One of the categories is translating of material culture. The food or clothes belong to this category. Every culture has its own original food or clothes and its original name. Next category is social culture and translation. Many countries have their own specific names for example, of their historical events.

Gestures and habits are important to know for the translator and the receiver. Gestures might have different meanings in different cultures. To avoid wrong translations translators should know the gestures and the habits of the translating language very well. Very specific are Chinese gestures, within interaction with Chinese culture, we should be aware of this fact (*blow one's nose is impolite on public places, to bow yourself if you want to greet somebody instead of shaking his or her hand*). Even though we live in globalized word and cultural differences are not so enormous, we still should be aware of these issues.

The practical part of this thesis deals with cultural differences between Czech culture and culture in the United States of America. Nowadays also Czech citizens have some basic background about culture in the U.S. but while watching films or reading books from American environment in some cases is demanding deeper cultural knowledge. The following chapter deals with basic differences between Czech and American culture. In the practical part will be these differences discussed in details on given examples.

3.3 American and Czech culture

It is more difficult to describe American culture then Czech culture, because the USA is not just another country. It spans a continent, and has much more bigger population

²⁷ Edward T. Hall and Mildred Reed Hall, *Understanding Cultural Differences*, (Boston: Intercultural Press, Inc, 1990), 3

whose ancestor came almost from every country in the world. American culture is a rich mix of Anglo-Saxon, French, German, Scandinavian, Spanish and so on. In its early days the country was strongly influenced by the British and other people from northern Europe, its laws are based on British common law and American English has absorbed many northern European words.²⁸ The expression “melting-pot” is suitable for the American population. Despite its ethnic diversity, the U.S. has managed to absorb bits and pieces of many cultures and weave them into a unique culture that is strikingly consistent and distinct.²⁹ Even though Americans do not have so long history such as Czech Republic, they are very proud of it. They treat their history as alive and every single historical event is celebrated, be it local or national event.

One of the bigger differences that non-Americans should be aware of is an extreme informality. Americans call most of people by their first name or by their nicknames. This fact could surprise many people and make them feel uncomfortable. Czechs very often follow strict formality and salutation Mr. or Mrs. is not only polite but mostly demanding, for instance, salutation of a boss.

Most Americans believe that having a large and loving family is one of the most important things in the life. They are used to move their houses miles away to get better job. In the contrary, it is not so common in Czech Republic people take care about their houses. Actually, the reason might be that these houses are often inherited from generation to generation. Czech families mostly live very close to each other or even in one house live more generations. It is not so typical for American families. Their retirement majority prefers to live in the retirement houses than live with their grown children.

In general, Americans strongly believe that it is important to get a good education. “Education is the key to our future,” “You learn something new every day,” “You are never too old to learn something,” and similar sayings describe the general attitude of most Americans towards education.³⁰

Americans themselves are very nationalistic, two known signs of their nationalism are American flags hung on their porches and the fact that children learn the text of Preamble of the US Constitution in kindergartens.

²⁸ Edward T. Hall and Mildred Reed Hall, 139

²⁹ Edward T. Hall and Mildred Reed Hall, 140

³⁰ Mary Matz. *Fraus Reálie Spojených Států amerických*. (Plzeň: Fraus), 29

Very generally, still today the United States consists of people who are very deeply religious, and even conservative – despite the picture presented in many Hollywood movies, pop music videos, and fashion. In fact, in one recent survey, about 80% of Americans said they believe in some form of religion, whether or not they belong to a traditional church.³¹ Religions differ from family to family because of national variety but Christianity dominates, another religious can be seen such as: Christian fundamentalism or evangelical movement. Regardless of the name of the religion or its denomination, religion has always been an important social force in American culture, and evidence of this may be seen in “four s’s” of the American character: self-improvement, smiling, services, and security.³² Much more than Czechs, Americans are members of church groups, they organize dinners, picnics, trips, and dances.³³

According to book *Realie Spojených států amerických* by Mary Matz, in general, Americans strongly believe that it’s important to get a good education. American society in even the smallest towns has changed dramatically in the last few years due to immigration. Legal immigrant refugees from countries as diverse as Somalia and Laos have settled. The US department of Education conducted nationwide literacy test of adults aged 16 and older and found out that more than 5 percent did not even understand the test.

Well known expression connected with America is an American dream. This is the belief of Americans that their country offers opportunities for a good and successful life. For minorities and people coming from abroad or live in America, the dream also includes freedom and equal rights.³⁴

According to Czech linguist Jaroslav Peprník, *Británie a USA: Ilustrované realie*, the way of life is somewhat different from ours. People in their leisure time do not walk in the streets and do not go for short hikes. They stay at home more, and give parties and go to restaurants more often than we do. They also like to watch parades, attend various special events (e.g. in the capital children’s Easter egg-rolling). American football and baseball games are often a family outing, while in Czech Republic mainly men go to stadiums. Basketball is popular in high schools and colleges.

³¹ Mary Matz, 127

³² Ibid., 133

³³ Jaroslav Peprník, *Británie a USA: Ilustrované realie*, (Olomouc: Nakladatelství Olomouc, 2004), 198

³⁴ Ritva Leppihalme, *Oxford Guide to British and American Culture: For Learners of English*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005)

Americans are very generous people, e.g. university graduates regularly support their old schools.³⁵

³⁵ Peprník, 206

II. ANALYSIS

4 ANALYSED MATERIAL

Analyzed material is satirical cartoon and serial about family called The Simpsons, living in Springfield. Even though this is the cartoon it is determined for adults. This cartoon was aired for first time in 1989 and the author of this series is Matt Groening. Nowadays is broadcasted twenty-fourth season.

The cartoon depicts current society and its main issues, its topics are very often social problems and phenomena such as religion, politicians, global warming, homosexuals, old people, different races and nations living in the USA or morality. We can also see a parody of political representatives, famous people or films.

The main characters are members of the Simpsons family, typical middle-class, white American family: a husband, Homer, working in a factory to support his family, a wife Marge, at home looking after the household, and taking care about their children, the oldest is Bart, then Lisa and the youngest is baby Maggie. They live in a house with a cat and a dog in the fictional city called Springfield.

Few more characters to mention can be Mr. Burns, represents the corporate boss cares only about money and bottom line. Apu, typical dweller of an American town, an Indian man and average store worker, reflecting the struggles of immigrants in the USA

The characters and the place itself, reflect the references to a typical American family, town and troubles, such as daily problems of ordinary people: road rage, cheating in school, refuse collection and so on. Every American may find himself in this TV show.

Each episode starts with so called couch gag when all The Simpson family meets in the living room on the couch. This indicates the ritual of watching TV together which is for most of American families common activity.

Also all problems are discussed even in the kitchen/dining room over the meal or in the living room. This might be seen as the reflection of common American habit, discussing important personal issues during dinner or while watching TV.

Most of children love watching cartoons and in the Simpsons is not any difference, Bart and Lisa love Itchy and Scratchy cartoon where main characters are mouse and cat teasing each other, not accidently seems to be this cartoon similar to real famous cartoon Tom and Jerry.³⁶

³⁶ Paul A. Cantor, "The Simpsons: Atomistic Politics and the Nuclear Family," *Political Theory* 27, no. 6 (1999):734, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/192244> (accessed April 23, 2013).

This bachelor thesis tries to analyze an episode from a wider point of view, first – if there is whole plot intertextuality, if there are some features allude to historical events or cultural background. Then given expressions are chosen and differences of the translation from English language to Czech language are discussed. This analytical part discusses the role of cultural background of the viewer and adaptation of the translation to the Czech culture. In some cases the translation may be literally translated and in some cases the expressions may be replaced by expressions which are more familiar to the Czech audience.

The analyzed episodes are:

- S17E18 The Wettest Stories Ever Told
- S17E21 Monkey Suits
- S23E05 The Food Wife
- S23E06 The Book Job,
- S23E08 The Ten Percent Solution,
- S23E10 Politically Inept with Homer Simpson,
- S23E13 The Daughter Also Rises
- S23E16 How I Wet Your Mother
- S23E18 Beware My Cheating Bart

5 THE METHODS

The practical part is based on the theoretical part and it discusses the American cartoon *The Simpsons*, its translation into Czech language and understanding American cultural features. The Czech translation usually does not take in account the unfamiliarity of the Czech viewer with the American culture. The historical events, expressions or manners are not very often adapted to Czech culture in this translation. The thesis compares the differences of the original version and Czech translation. It also considers how the translation influenced the final understanding of the given situation because *The Simpsons* are based on intertextuality and cultural references. There is no single episode without allusions and references. These features are inseparable part of the show and it could not exist without it.

The practical part analyses nine episodes. First two episodes, particularly episodes S17E18 and S17E21, are focused on important historical events and cultural background of period described in these two episodes. The rest of analyzed episodes is focused on current cultural affairs. These episodes are episodes of twenty-third season, the last season which was translated into Czech language and broadcasted in the Czech Republic. The thesis tries to show that *The Simpsons* allude both to historical events and to current cultural context, as well, such as politics or social issues. If it is possible I try to suggest translation more familiar to Czech audience but in many cases it is not feasible from the point of view of cultural context. Therefore a different translation is suggested only for few expressions. Not all of them.

This chapter discusses mainly methods of translating allusions where the name is maintained, where the name is replaced by similar expression of target language or where the name is completely omitted. It is also needed to consider different target groups: various culture, age or nationality of the audience.

In *The Simpsons* appear two types of cultural translation. The cultural references are even translated literally or adapted to a given culture, in this case, to the Czech culture. The expression is replaced by expression which is more familiar to Czech viewer. When the expressions are maintained in original way, the viewer has to have deeper background about current situation in the USA.

In the second chapter of the theoretical part is mention linguist Nida and his five cases where appear problems with finding the correct equivalent. These problems occur very often in *The Simpsons*: names, buildings or historical events are not transformed into

target language (Czech language) and the target audience might have problems with understanding the main point. This issue is described in the practical part on the given examples.

Linguists Neubert and Ghreve dealt with a translation as a text. The message and its orientation are kept in *The Simpsons* whereas the adaptation to a given culture is omitted. There is no more information used, so the viewer has to cope with the text oneself. Intertextuality is one of main parts what makes this cartoon special and why it is necessary to have the background of current not only social situation in the USA.

In every analyzed episode is firstly explained the original expression marked as (1) followed by Czech translation, marked as (2). If there are more expressions to discuss in one episode, expressions are numbered as follow: original expression (3) and translated expression (4) and so on.

6 ANALYSIS

S17E18 The Wettest Stories Ever Told

This episode consists of three stories. This practical part is dealt only with the first one, the story about Mayflower ship. In this story, Marge is the widow with her three children and meets Homer on the Mayflower ship. The narrative is full of references to Puritans and England – Mayflower ship, clothes or prayers.

Puritans (1) floated on the Mayflower boat to America because they did not agree with the king's Henry VI. church. During the religious upheavals of the 16th century, group of called Puritans sought to reform the established Church of England from within. Essentially, they demanded that the rituals and structures associated with Roman Catholicism be replaced by simpler Calvinist Protestant forms of faith and worship. Some members of the congregation grew dissatisfied with this discrimination and resolved to emigrate to the New World. In 1620 they boarded on the *Mayflower ship* (2) and landed in New England. This is known and important historical event for American citizens because the first Thanksgiving day was celebrated a year after Puritans had arrived to America.³⁷ Expressions (1) and (2) are American historical terms and especially (1) is supposed to be known all over the world. The Czech version of (1) is very similar to English original – *Puritáni* and in *The Simpsons* it is kept. This expression is commonly used in Czech language and the substitution is not needed at all. On the other hand (2) translated as *lod' Mayflower* might need a substitution, it does not have to be clear enough to Czech viewer, but there is probably no equal historical expression more familiar to Czech viewer hence the keeping of the original name is appropriate. By substituting the term (2) by other even similar phrase, the whole plot would lost the original meaning and the references might not be understood. Therefore to understand the allusion of one of the biggest American historical events, the knowledge of American history is needed.

Another example worth mentioning is *Red lobster* (1) restaurant. When the Simpsons family sits at the restaurant they mention (1). The translation is *Červený Humr* (2). (1) is real chain of sea food restaurants in the USA with long tradition. They operate in many countries such as Canada or Japan. Most of Americans, Canadians, or Japanese know this

³⁷ Bureau of International Informational Program, "Outline of U.S. History," US Department of State, <http://www.america.gov/media/pdf/books/historytln.pdf#popup> (accessed April 20, 2013), 13

chain of restaurants and they perceive it as very popular sea food restaurants.³⁸ In this case the expression is literally translated, the name is retained and unchanged. Although the original meaning is kept, the question might be if the Czech viewer is able to understand that (1) is real restaurant which it is not made up. In this example the replacement of the (1) by a similar luxurious sea food restaurant, which is more known to Czech viewer would be better to understand the allusion. Because by replacing the original name the plot will not lose its original meaning. Unfortunately sea restaurants in the Czech Republic are rare hence there is nearly no possibilities how the expression (2) substitute.

S17E21 The Monkey Suit

Lisa is brought to a trial for spreading evolutionary thoughts because teaching evolution was forbidden and replaced by teaching the creationism in Springfield.

In this case it is seen a great similarity to Scopes Trial, process of the state of Tennessee versus John Thomas Scopes. John Scopes, a science teacher, was being tried for teaching evolution in school, a practice that had been outlawed in Tennessee earlier that year.³⁹ This trial called out big interested of public and became one of the most watched trial in the USA. Even though the trial was popular and the public was really interested in this process. In this instance the expressions are kept and the plot is not adapted to Czech culture because from historical point of view it is not possible. Such historical event should be maintained but Czech viewer, not deeply involved in American history does not have to understand the historical background.

Within whole episode are used many cultural expressions. This thesis will discussed only few of them. When the Simpsons family goes to museum on the wall appears the banner of *Kellog's (1)* company. The parody of Kellogg's Frosted Flakes is obvious because of the spelling similarities – *Kellog's* and *Kellogg's*, and because of the tiger on the banner – this is the mascot known as Tony the Tiger. This company operates in many countries such as Canada or United Kingdom and its brand includes for instance Corn Flakes or Pringles.⁴⁰ The Czech version uses translation *Kelloggsovi vločky(2)*. Because

³⁸ "Red Lobster," last modified January, 2012. <http://www.redlobster.com/>

³⁹ Fitzgerald, Stephanie. *The Scopes Trial: the battle over teaching evolution*. (Mineapolis: Compass Point Book, 2007), str. 10

⁴⁰ "Kellogg's," last modified March, 2011. http://www.kelloggs.com/en_US/home.html

the company Kellogg's and its products might not be known to Czech audience, the translation *vločky* could be sufficient for Czechs.

George Will (1) is mentioned in this episode in relation to question of education of creationism in schools. George Will is well-known investigative journalist, conservatives and Pulitzer-Prize winner.⁴¹The original name of this journalist is also kept in translation. Great cultural clash is seen in this instance - without background knowledge of politics and journalism in the USA, the allusion is lost. Therefore we could suggest substitute (1) by a known Czech investigative journalist, such as Josef Klíma, Jan Kroupa, or Radek John used to be respected investigative journalist. But if we substitute American investigative journalist by Czech investigative journalist the whole context is disturbed and might be rather confusing.

S23E05 The Food Wife

In this episode Homer takes Lisa and Bart to E4 convention, which is the allusion of E3 convention, an annual trade fair for computers and video games,⁴² therefore in this episode are many references to games. And later on Lisa, Bart and Marge become gourmets.

At the beginning of this episode is showed the game called *Furious Fliers* (1) which refers to the game Angry Birds by Google. The Czech translation is *Fsteklí ptáci* (2) hence according to this translation we can say that (2) keeps the original meaning and try to maintain the humor by replacing the letter "v" by the letter "f" in the word *fstekli*. Nevertheless, sufficient knowledge of the English language is demanding to recognize the pun.

Later on, when Lisa sees one of her favorite games she calls it *Marching Band* (3). Because we know that Lisa plays the saxophone in the school marching band, we can presume that the name of the game (3) is a parody. When Lisa starts playing the game by trying play the virtual saxophone in the virtual marching band, the parody becomes cleaner. It is parody of famous music video game, called the Rock Band. This game is

⁴¹ George F. Will, "George F. Will: Opinion Writer," The Washington Post, June 20, 2005, http://www.washingtonpost.com/george-f-will/2011/02/24/ABVZKXN_page.html

⁴² "Expo3," last modified September, 2012. <http://www.e3expo.com/>

popular all over the world and the purpose is to play as in a rock band, the players can play the lead guitar, bass guitar or drums with instrument controllers.⁴³

Czech translation of this game is *Rock Band* (4). This version does not try to parody Rock band game and gives us directly the original parodied meaning. In this case the allusion is completely omitted and parody is lost. What might be also confusing is the fact that Lisa plays the saxophone but in Czech translated version loves game called Rock Band, and during the game play the saxophone.

At the very end of this episode Marge talks to *Mr. Gordon Ramsay* (5) in original version, while *Mr. Polraich* (6) appears in the Czech translated version. Well known British chef and restaurateur is (5). He hosts the reality show "*Hell's Kitchen*." This reality show tries to find best chefs in the USA.⁴⁴ Whereas (6) became well-known Czech chef and restaurateur because of the Czech reality show "*Ano, šéfe!*" In this reality show Mr. Polraich visits Czech restaurants and tries to improve their business, to bring more customers and last but not least gives advice to chefs about cooking.⁴⁵ Although the original expression (5) was replaced by expression more familiar to Czech version the meaning is kept.

Despite the fact that the adaptation to Czech context is sufficient and can help Czech viewer understand the parody, the show *Hell's Kitchen* has been broadcasted more than one year on Czech TVs under title *Pekelná kuchyně*, and possibly many Czechs know this show.⁴⁶ Therefore I would claim that the adaptation was not as necessary as in previous examples.

S23E06 The Book Job

This episode begins at the show *The Sitting with Dinosaurs*. Then Lisa decides to write her own book and Homer does so. Almost whole plot is the parody of the *Ocean's Trilogy*, for Czech audience well known and famous trilogy, known as *Danyho partáci*.

There are also allusions of the Harry Potter book, such as suggested beginning of new book: young boy who came to a magical school, play game similar to "Quidditch," famous game from Harry Potter books. Because Harry Potter books are popular in the Czech

⁴³ "Rock Band," last modified April, 2010, <http://rockband3.co.uk/>

⁴⁴ "Hell's Kitchen," last modified March, 213, <http://www.fox.com/hellskitchen/>

⁴⁵ "Ano, šéfe!" last modified <http://www.iprima.cz/anosefe>

⁴⁶ "Barrandov," last modified <http://www.barrandov.tv/49147-pekelná-kuchyně>

Republic, in the Simpsons are used expressions from already translated Harry Potter books. Hence Czech viewer should be able to recognize the references.

The name of this episode is *The Book Job* (1) which is the reference to the film *The Bank Job* where is pictured the real robbery, called Baker Street Robbery in London, 1977. Czech version *Velká knižní loupež* (2) evokes the similarity to the original episode name (1). Therefore we might say that the intention is preserved and sufficiently adapted to Czech context.

As is mentioned above, the episode starts at show originally called *Sitting with Dinosaurs* (3) translated as *Posezení s dinosaury* (4). The name (3) references to a successful American show called *Walking with Dinosaurs*, documentary television miniseries, broadcasted in late 90s.⁴⁷

The Czech version (4) preserves the original meaning but still is a small possibility that the Czech audience can understand the allusion. The show (3) is not as known in the Czech Republic as in the United States. We can even presume it is not known at all. This whole translation loses the main information. The cultural clash is seen in different TV shows broadcasted in the USA and the Czech Republic.

S23E08 The Ten Percent Solution

The Ten Percent Solutions (1) is an allusion of the film *The Seven-Per-Cent Solution* based on Sherlock Holmes stories by Nicolas Meyer. This title was replaced by different expression *Krustyho comeback* (2). It might seem that there is no connection between these two terms if we think about the titles (1) and (2) but if we consider *The Seven-Per-Cent Solution* plot and the (1) plot there is a similarity. Sherlock in the *The Seven-Per-Cent Solution* tries to come back to his life, to get rid of his drug addiction and in the (1) is the Krusty clown who is not popular anymore and has to work hard to regain his popularity. Even though it seemed that the allusion is omitted, the allusion is there but slightly hidden. The Czech translation tries to keep the main thought of the title, which may be “comeback.”

When the Simpsons family goes to Museum of television, many popular American serials, films and characters are seen there. One of them is *Fatso Flanagan* (3) translated as *Thustoch Flanagan* (4). (3) is the reference to The show *Adventures of Fatso Flanagan*,

⁴⁷ “Walking with Dinosaurs,” last modified April, 2011, <http://www.dinosaurlive.com/>

which was real very popular black and white TV show in the USA. The translation (4) is literal but the allusion of real TV show gets lost because the show was not broadcasted in the Czech Republic.

The short extract from *The Adventures of Fatso Flanagan* is showed on TV, but Marge claims it is only copy of *Honeymooners* (5). The Czech version keeps the original phrase and do not translate it. *The Honeymooners* was also one of the very famous serials in the USA.⁴⁸ The intertextuality is obvious for Americans viewer but Czech audience might have problems with understanding this allusions.

In one scene Homer searches the website HULU, this is the real well known website in the USA where is possible to watch TV shows and movies online.⁴⁹ But for Czechs these websites are not available. In this case the adaptation to Czech culture is not possible and the allusion gets lost.

S23E10 Politically inept with Homer Simpson

Bart uploads a video of Homer protesting against the airlines and this video becomes very famous. Homer gets his own political talk show and is supported by average Americans. Therefore, Republicans, the American political party, asks Homer to choose next presidential candidate. He chooses Ted Nugent, famous American singer, and to millions of citizens, Nugent is the nation's most outspoken proponent of first and second Amendment rights, conducting thousands of pro-gun, pro-freedom, pro-America interviews in major media worldwide.⁵⁰ Czech version keeps the original expression, Ted Nugent, do not replace it or do not try to omit it. Again, for most of Czechs this singer does not have to be known as much. In case of substitution almost whole plot of this episode would get different meaning and lost its original thought.

At the very beginning the Simpsons family is at the airport and when Lisa has to open her suitcase Bart finds book written by Kurt Vonnegut. This name is kept also in the translated version. The Czech translation does not adapt this into Czech culture and keeps the author's name. Even though the Kurt Vonnegut was famous American writer of satires

⁴⁸ "Honeymooners," last modified January, 2010, <http://www.honeymooners.net/>

⁴⁹ "HULU," last modified, February 2013, <http://www.hulu.com/>

⁵⁰ "Ted Nugent," <http://www.tednugent.com/>, (Access May 1, 2013),

or science fictions,⁵¹ many people might not to know what kind of books the author writes or even do not have to know the author is real.

The original name of this episode is *Politically Inept with Homer Simpson* (1). The name (1) is the allusion of the late night show *Politically Incorrect* with the host Bill Maher, broadcasted from 1993 to 2002. Bill Maher hosted different people, varied from show business to politicians. He tried to point out current issues and discussed them with his guests.

Czech version was broadcasted as *Otázky Homera Simpsona*(2). (2)evokes the similarity with the Czech political talk show *Otázky Václava Moravce*. According to this translation it is seen that the translators tried to adapt the translation to Czech culture, to Czech viewer. But still, there is a bit difference between original *Otázky Václava Moravce* show and *Politically Incorrect* show. *Otázky Václava Moravce* is serious political show whereas *Politically Incorrect* was determined to entertain audience, the host invites about four guests and discusses current issues and news with them. Thus, I would suggest translation for instance *Show Homera Simpsona*, allusion to *Show Jana Krause*. The Czech viewer would be able to better understand the parody and the sarcasm.

S23E13 The Daughter Also Rises

Name of this episode *The Daughter Also Rises* (1) is supposed to be an allusion of Hemingway's book *The Sun Also Rises*. This title (1) is translated as *Fiesta s Lízou* (2). The book *The Sun Also Rises* was translated into Czech as *Fiesta*. Nevertheless the translation differs it still keeps the original intention, Hemingway and his books are known in the Czech Republic, hence I would presume this translation refers to the book directly.

At very beginning of this episode Bart and Lisa watch *Itchy and Scratchy* cartoon with title *Roses are red, violence is due* (3). This rhyme is an allusion of famous American love poem (a). In Czech version the translation is *Kočka leze dírou, násilí oknem* (4) - an allusion of favorite nursery song (b).

- | | |
|--|--|
| <p>a) Roses are red, Violets are blue, Sugar is sweet, And so are you.</p> | <p>b) Kočka leze dírou, pes oknem.</p> |
|--|--|

⁵¹ "Vonnegut," last modified June, 2012, <http://www.vonnegut.com/>

In both (3) and (4) it is showed great word-play. What worth to mention is that the number of syllables has changed. The translation keeps the meaning and makes the cultural difference more understandable for Czech viewer. (4) helps Czech viewer understand humor of Itchy and Scratchy cartoon.

This episode mingles two stories, Lisa falls in love with the young French boy, and Bart and his friend Milhouse try to break down the myths. In the first story about Lisa and French boy it is seen allusion of Hemingway's novel *The Sun Also Rises*. The book is about French bohemians and love. During whole story are heard French songs sung by Edit Piaf (French singer), there is also the shot where Lisa and the boy watch the Spanish corrida, which is also mentioned in the Hemingway book.

Hemingway, as an author, is very well known in Czech Republic, nevertheless, the reference might not be clear to a viewer who has not read the book. In this example it is seen that not only American common cultural knowledge is needed, but also literary one. The viewer might know who Hemingway was, but without reading the book *The Sun Also Rises* the references will not be understood.

The second story in this episode is about Bart and his friend Milhouse. They watched "*The MythCrackers*" show parodies the show *Myth Busters* where two hosts try to disprove myths and legends⁵² therefore, Bart and Milhouse decide to imitate this show. In *The Simpsons* is heard the show's theme song and the *confirmed* and *busted* (5) stamps across whole screen appear. This TV show was broadcasted in Czech Republic as well therefore the intertextuality does not have to be strange to Czech viewer and Czechs could cope with this intertextuality without bigger problems. Because of this fact, the Czech version of (5) uses Czech phrases which appear in the Czech translated version *Myth Busters*.

S23E16 How I Wet Your Mother

In this story Homer has troubles with wetting the bed. Hence Marge decides to get into Homer's dreams and try to find the reason of Homer's problem. Whole plot is obvious parody on the *Inception* movie.⁵³ In both *The Simpsons* and *Inception* movie, they travel between dreams. Every dream differs and has its own pitfalls.

⁵² Discovery, "Myth Busters," Discovery, <http://dsc.discovery.com/tv-shows/mythbusters> (accessed May 1, 2013)

⁵³ "Warner Bros" last modified January, 2013 <http://www.warnerbros.co.uk/inception/mainsite/>

The title *How I wet your mother* (1) alludes to famous American sitcom *How I Met Your Mother*. The pun is probably the only one thing these two titles have in common. The sitcom *How I Met Your Mother* tells stories about five friends living in New York and having their own troubles, such as love, work or family. Whereas episode *How I Wet Your Mother* tells story about Homer and his problems with wetting the bed.

Czech title is *Jak jsem prospal vaši matku* (2) is a word play with Czech version of *How I Met Your Mother* title which is *Jak jsem poznal vaši matku*. For those who know this sitcom the similarity and parody is obvious. The translator preserves the meaning and the allusion to sitcom *How I Met Your Mother*.

When Homer, Carl, and Lenny discuss the football match, they mention that they followed the referee to his house and “beat the crap out of him.” But according to Carl he thinks it was *Foot Locker* (3) employee. (3) is the American sportswear and footwear retailer.⁵⁴ Whereas the Czech translation is *prodavač obuvi* (4), obviously the original expression was not kept and the parody of well-known sportswear and footwear retailer was omitted. This omission avoids possible problematic substitution of (3) expression.

Later on, when Homer argues with his own brain he refers to reality show with Lamar Odom (5) playing Xbox. Lamar Odom is American basketball player and had his own reality show broadcasted in 2012.⁵⁵ In the target language is the original name left. But in this case, Czech viewer may ask, who actually is Lamar Odom, and what reality show is Homer talking about? But in the Czech Republic are not broadcasted such reality shows hence there is no possible equal Czech expression.

S23E18 Beware My Cheating Bart

At the beginning of this episode it is seen notice “*now entering Oregon*”(1) below *The Simpsons* title. Every episode also this one has a chalkboard gag which says “*The true location of Springfield is in any state but yours.*”(2) both (1) and (2) are references to Matt Groening’s revelations that Springfield was named for Springfield, Oregon.⁵⁶ Very interesting fact is that the (1) is not translated but replace with different zinger, which is

⁵⁴ “Footlocker,” last modified February 2013, <http://www.footlocker.com/>

⁵⁵ “Lamar Odom,” last modified December 2012, <http://www.lamarodom.com/>

⁵⁶ Barney Hendersno, “The Simpsons Creator Matt Groening Reveals Springfield, Oregon is his inspiration,” *The Telegraph* (April 11, 2012), under TV and Radio, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/tvandradio/9197180/The-Simpsons-creator-Matt-Groening-reveals-Springfield-Oregon-is-his-inspiration.html> (accessed April 20, 2013)

not even similar to original that is “*učitelky nemusí platit daň z ošklivosti.*” (3) Probably the translator wanted to avoid the problematic understanding of (1) and rather replace original notice by different, funny notice (3).

Homer watches show *Stranded* (3) which is an obvious parody of *Lost*⁵⁷. This show was very successful both in the USA and in the Czech Republic. The references might be understood if only because the Czech translation is *Postrácení* (4). This translation evokes the allusion to Czech official translation of *Lost* – *Ztraceni*. The title sounds similar hence the reference is preserved.

⁵⁷ ABC, “LOST,” ABC, <http://abc.go.com/shows/lost>, (accessed April 23, 2013)

CONCLUSION

This bachelor thesis dealt with cultural differences in translation applied on the TV show *The Simpsons*. Nowadays the cultural differences are slowly wash away but still there are some typical features for given cultures left and it might be difficult to understand these features without sufficient knowledge.

The theoretical part discussed the main features of translation and its major approaches to translation in the first chapter Translation. The second chapter, Intertextuality, discussed intertextuality and its main problematic features such as allusions, metaphors or puns. These are seen as one of the most problematic elements of translation and the translation or even adaptation may be complicated. The opinions on intertextuality diverse but most of them build up their ideas on the Kristeva's work.

The third chapter American and Czech culture compared the cultural differences between the United States of America and the Czech Republic. In some cases it was difficult to compare the USA because the country is heterogenous, it is not only one nation, there are many small nations connected together, and this make the United States of America so unique. But despite the globalization there are still differences between Czech and American culture such as way of life, culture, manners, or perception of religion.

The practical part analyzed the TV show *The Simpsons*, its translation and the problematic cultural features. *The Simpsons* are very good example of American culture, their manners and habits.

The practical part was divided into three chapters. In the chapter Analyzed Material, consisted of detailed description of *The Simpsons* show. What the show is about, what are the main characters or how does it reflect typical American family and culture. Next chapter was The Methods, which described techniques used for analysis of *The Simpson* and finally last chapter The Analysis itself.

The analysis showed that *The Simpsons* are full of intertextuality, allusions and references to many historical events and current cultural context. Most of chosen episodes are one big reference to for instance history, such as episode *The Wettest Stories Ever Told*, and its allusion to Puritans and *Mayflower* ship. Or reference to current political situation – presidential elections in episode *Politically Inept* with Homer.

The adaptation to Czech culture was not possible in many cases thus was minimal, and thus Czech viewer may not understand the allusions to American history or criticism of current political and social situation in The USA

When the analysis went deeper, I found out that there are many expressions which belong to American culture and might be very difficult to translate them into Czech language and what is more, to adapt it to Czech culture.

Still, the adaptation of the expressions was possible in some examples and the author of the Czech translation kept the meaning and adopted the term to target language. Nevertheless, still dominated the expression which are not adapted into Czech language and they are simply translated and keep the original expression also in the target language. Mostly because there is no similar equivalent in Czech culture or if so, the meaning of whole plot would not be held or would be disturbed.

This bachelor thesis proves that watching foreign films or shows demands awareness of the culture the film comes from. Otherwise the ambiguity may cause misunderstanding or not understanding a situation or a text at all.

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